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LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

REV. J. D. CASEWELL.

BY A LATE MEMBER OF HIS CHURCH.

ST. JOHN, N. B.
1895.

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SAINT JOHN, DECEMBER, 8th, 1835.

SIR,—It is with feelings of no ordinary kind be assured, that I thus come forward in a public manner to explain to the world, the cause of my exclusion from the Baptist Church in this city.

I do not do it with a view to render myself conspicuous, or popular, but simply with a view to place the transaction in a fair and proper light; lest in the opinion of many, a false and improper colouring might be given it; which I very much fear, from your partial communications on the subject will be the case.

Not having the *least* claim, to even the *commonest* acquaintance with literature; it cannot be supposed, that I shall put together, even in the form of a letter, such a *flowery* and *elegant* composition, as I might do, were I to extract from Hall, Jay, James, and others, their thoughts and language, present them to the public as my *own*. If I were vain enough to do this, I should fear detection, as my common intercourse with society, would powerfully contribute to the impression, that such ideas, such elegant language, could not be my *own*, but was *borrowed*.

It is sufficient for me to know, that God having blessed me with common sense, and having in the course of my life had an opportunity of *hearing* great men, and *reading* their works; I have been enabled thereby to exercise a judgment of my own, with reference to Preachers and their talents. Perhaps it was this impression on the minds of my late bre-

thren, that induced them, to delegate me to get for them a Minister, if possible, while in England last winter. Whether this were so or not, I do not pretend to say. nor does it matter to me; only this I know, and you know it too, that I had such a delegation, and that it has been performed, your residence here demonstrates.

It is true that the compensation held out for a Minister, was not such as would induce a man of eminent learning and talents to come out here; and consequently all that remained for me to do, was to adhere to the advice of those with whom I was to take counsel, and to do the best I could in getting one. That I attended to this matter, while in England, most faithfully, can be easily proved, and corresponded with many influential Ministers in the denomination on the subject; and you know that ere any thing was determined respecting you, I had three other offers: men who stood ready to go if I would say the word. You cannot but recollect, the particular circumstances which led to my choice of you, for the Baptist Church in this City, and you ought this day to feel it, that the choice was made, under considerable responsibility on my part; being in the first place, *totally against the advice* of the Rev. Gentleman with whom I was to advise under the delegation of the church.

It is painful for me even to recur to these things, nor should I, were it not that I am forced to do it by your late unaccountable conduct towards me, tinctured as it has been with acrimony of the severest kind. As it is, I shall now without fear of successful contradiction, fearlessly leave on record, and make known to the religious community of this place, all my conduct towards you, and your base ingratitude to me.

You cannot but recollect, the great trial I had respecting the propriety of my taking you out, on the part of that Minister to whom I have already referred; who you know assured me, that you were not even acquainted, with the *common-*

est elements of literature, and for some time delayed taking any part whatever in your Ordination, and afterwards only took an inferior one; when he found I had made up my mind to take you. You are aware, that he shook off from himself all responsibility, and made a statement of this in a letter to his friend here. You are also acquainted with the personal responsibility I undertook, to bring you to this country, by which I have been the instrument of raising you from the daily occupation of a humble mechanic, to that high, and respectable situation you now hold. You may add to all these facts, the great personal kindness, and disinterested friendship, I have always felt for you, and your progress as a minister, and then ask your own conscience whether you have dealt kindly with such a friend?

Why you should now turn round, and persecute me and my family for nothing, more than that, I did not flatter you, with the high encomiums uttered about you, and your splendid attainments, by most of my late brethren, even to your face, I am at a loss to determine. I would willingly if I could, ascribe it to a state of mind overbalanced by a kind of popularity, which no *sensible* man would scarcely feel, and therefore excuse it on that ground; but I fear, that added to this, you have taken counsel from bad advisers, which has in the short space of eight days, produced such a sad change of feeling in reference to myself and you.

But what have I done? is the question that I would in this form put to you. Not indeed that I would be thought hereby for a moment to solicit a reply, this I will leave at your pleasure; but in order to vindicate myself from some *implied* iniquity of which I might be supposed guilty, I feel myself bound as the father of a family, bred up in this city, and well known as a Baptist, for many, many years, thus to vindicate my own cause. I do it in appeals to you the more readily, as I am sure your conscience will answer, when passion is cool, and thoughts collected.

You came to my Store last Monday morning as you had frequently done, with the usual friendly smile, of well friend H—, *what do you think of my Sermons yesterday*, and continued with the same breath to say, *you were not out last Friday evening; Brother B. looked like a thunder cloud at me, &c. &c. &c.* I thought it strange you should come to me just in this way before a gentleman at my desk whom I employ at writing. I did not at once reply, after a little pause, I observed that I could see no reason why you should think Brother B. would look at you as you stated. I then observed to you in the kindest altho' most candid manner possible, that perhaps he did not like your continually harping on one string, as you had done in several of the late Sermons you have delivered. I thought myself, that in some instances you were too personal, and assured you, that for my part I did not approve of it, altho' I had not heard one word of complaint about it from others. I gave it you as my own opinion only, that such a constant strain of severity would not long please. To which you replied, (in a very imperious tone whether you saw it or not) by saying, *Well, it matters not to me whether I please or displease, so as my conscience is satisfied that I do my duty, I do not fear the face of any man, &c. &c.* All this said I is very well, but there is a way of doing things, that would not offend (nor do I know that it does offend) and yet great faithfulness be preserved—avoid severity by all means, and personality. The Church has been very kind to you while among them, and on the whole, I think you ought to deal out your rebukes gently. You cannot but recollect, how many replies you made me, about the wretched state of the Church when you arrived, and that you were not sensible of any particular, or extraordinary kindness shown to you; and referred to some pecuniary compensation, made to the Rev. Mr. S. when he first came to Liverpool, as by far a greater demonstration of regard than you had received. You remember that I said to you, that pounds, shillings, and pence was not in my estimation, the criterion of friendship, &c. &c. I wish rather, to call to your mind these things in a general

way, rather than to *particularize what you did say*, lest it might be prejudicial to your future ministry among the people over whom you now seem to possess such an influence.

Nor do I for a moment wish your popularity to cease. The regard I have for my own rights as a man, and character as a christian, compels me thus to come forward and state these things.

Rebukes gently. You observed, *why I have heard the Rev. Mr. S. of Liverpool lash his most intimate friends and wealthy members, when he conceived them wrong, in a far more severe manner than I ever did!* That I replied, made no difference, you should recollect that Mr. S. was a venerable Grey headed Minister, and at the very head of his profession: more than forty years had he endured the heat and burden of the day, as a Minister, a word of rebuke from him, would come well, while from you, a young man, and as compared to Mr. S. a child in the ministry, such severe rebukes would not be well received. However I continued, you must take no notice of what I say, but please God, and do good to the people; I sincerely hope your labours will be blessed, for my part I cannot say I like it, but do not regard my opinion, if your conscience dictates to you this path.

Little did I think, that you were offended at this conversation, uttered by me I am sure in entire friendship, and without one unfriendly feeling in my heart. And oh! how astonished was I to find, that instead of thinking no more about it for a while, you would go round among the members and congregation, and *personally*, (as you afterwards told me) asked their opinions of *your preaching*; and when thus ascertained, you with an air of triumph returned, with, *well Mr. H., I have been round to most of the members, and I find not one, in the same mind as yourself.*

Is it possible I said I, that you have taken the pains of going round *yourself*, and asking people what they thought of your

own preaching? Really Mr. C. this does appear to me childish in the extreme! I told you, I had not heard a word of disapprobation from either Church or Congregation; and why you should have taken the pains of so, doing I did not know. I am sorry I ever said a word about it, &c. &c. After some other conversation you left me, as I thought without one hard feeling; and little did I suppose I should hear any thing more about it. I felt no ill will, nor one unfriendly thought. And had you not went into the desk that evening, and commenting on Paul to Titus, in the ridiculous manner you did; telling over in public, and in a distorted way too, the conversation you had that day with a Brother in the Church, telling them you had been *charged with being too faithful reproving worldliness and sin too much, with being a child, &c.* And then concluding your observations, by saying, *that man's religion is as low as the earth! and that he would by working himself into the world, soon work himself out of the Church,* the difficulty would have ceased. By this unscriptural conduct, you very early discovered, your angry and passionate determination to have me excluded. I envy not your feelings, nor do I highly appreciate your vast acquaintance with human nature.

But why did you not stop here? Why did you the very next morning go to the house of one, totally unconnected with the Church or Congregation, and there say in the presence of several persons: *that I had grossly insulted you,* and that either you or I should leave the Church? Can it be possible, that a Minister of Christ should thus act? But this was not all, as if you were possessed of some diabolical influence, you took infinite pains, to circulate in a way neither manly nor christian-like, the conversation we had, by saying *I have been charged with being too faithful reproving sin too sharply, with being a child. And that my preaching would soon drive me from St. John, &c. &c.* Oh Sir! how you who by profession should be a master in Israel, could so overlook the plainest injunction that is on record on this point in Matt. xviii. 15, 16. I am not here to determine. You must have quite forgot the

Sermon you read upon it a few weeks since. "The words
"are. *Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go*
"tell him his fault, between thee and him alone; if he shall
"hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not
"hear thee; then take with thee, one or two more, that in the
"mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be establish-
"ed." Now had you obeyed the mandate of him you profess
to serve, and if you were offended with me, came in a friendly
way on Monday evening: instead of telling it to the Church
and Congregation first, the matter *could* have gone no
farther. Instead of this, look at your anti-scriptural conduct
your back biting! your tattling! &c. &c. and then ask your-
self; Is this the way I would like a brother to do to me in
similar circumstances?

It is in vain for you to say it was even an *offence*, at all,
or that it was committed before the *world*, as you have done
in order to give a color of propriety to the proceedings taken
upon it. You must be aware that people here, altho of plain
habits knows that one serious minded man, does not make a
world!!! The conversation, (for I will not call it an offence;) took place, as I have said, before one whom you knew to be
one of your own congregation, and before whom, in very
many instances before this, you did not hesitate to say many
things about the Church, &c. &c. He is ready to affirm
that the impression on his mind, from the whole of the con-
versation, was, that there was nothing in it at which any sen-
sible man would take offence; especially as between us who
had always been on terms of friendship and mutual regard.

Had you, instead of taking pains to circulate this frivolous
affair, even withheld conversation upon it, until in your wis-
dom you deemed it proper to make a church matter of it,
and then mentioned the whole circumstance as it really
stood: how much more honour would it have reflected on
your christian character. Now, what are you to do of this
case? You did in the course of the fact that was reported.

from Monday to Friday, in every way you could devise, work upon the feelings of my late Brethren and Sisters, by representing it in colours that the real conversation itself was unlikely to assume. Is this proper? Is this Scriptural? Sorry indeed am I, that I should be forced by your cruel conduct thus to put these questions to you.

I come now to the church meeting on Friday evening last, and cannot but express the horror I feel throughout, at the previous arrangements with which every thing was concocted by you to complete my overthrow. Here you stood indeed, not as a Minister of Christ should do, but as the accuser of a Brother, who dared to offer you in private conversation, what he intended for your good, and as he conceived in a kind manner; but what it seems you esteemed an insult! and even up to the said Friday evening, I had never been made acquainted *from you* that you were even *offended* at me. Although out of doors, to church and congregation, you had in no very measured terms mentioned it. Oh, tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon!

I, with my wife, and sister-in-law, were summoned to appear before a church, without one previous step being taken, either on the part of you, or the church to ascertain what the real state of this *alarming* offence was! Really, Sir! when I review the whole circumstance throughout, what was first a plain, simple conversation, and entered into by yourself, and that too at a time, above all times the worst to talk upon religious matters: what was in fact a mole hill! rendered such a mountain! by your unchristian like mode of proceeding: It is no wonder, that when you did at the meeting here alluded to, make such grave *charges* against your friend and brother, by asserting as you did, that *I began to complain of your preaching, and charged you with preaching too faithful, reproving sin too much, being personal, and that I called you a child*, and in fact that I insulted you! I say it

is no wonder that human nature overcame my judgment, and that for awhile my temper overcame me.

Here thought I, is a man who a few months ago, begged of me to give him a friendly hint, when I heard him drop any thing from the Pulpit, that I might deem improper, or that might be softened, or if I could at any time suggest any thing I thought calculated to improve him, and be beneficial to his ministerial character ; now, for a mere opinion of my own, perhaps not one besides me in the church of the same mind, constitute that opinion into a grave charge of insult, and at once, without any previous step, make it a church matter.

I really even now, while I write, can scarcely bring my mind to believe that you can possibly be in your right mind ! If you are, I hope the irreparable injury you have done me, and the base ingratitude with which you have served me, may in the great day of God be forgiven you. How you can go into that pulpit, and look down upon my pew deserted ! its owners and occupants, who for fifteen years have had a name and a place with the Baptist Church, and who in times past enjoyed in common with their brethren, the benefit of Church Communion : now driven through your priestly domination to seek an asylum elsewhere. If I say, you can calmly do this without feeling compunction ; I envy not your religion, nor your exalted enjoyments so much of late talked of. In conclusion, let me tell you the time will doubtless come, when your fine flourishes in the pulpit—your surprising elegance of composition—richness of thought—in fact when all the borrowed plumes you now figure in, will be detected, and the result prove you a man of no more than even a very *common* education ! Already the scent is out, and by your late proceedings the covering will be unveiled, and people will see it useless to pay a man for reading Hall and others, when they can read it themselves, although with not quite so much physical power ! I now leave you to yourself

and your God, not doubting however unhappily I might have conducted myself in the meeting alluded to in this letter, but a very little time, will convince, every will thinking person in this community, that I had not, nor possibly could have, the most distant idea of offending you, and that the revengeful spirit, with which you have pursued me, will discover itself to your own shame and mortification.

I am Sir, Your much injured Servant,

JAMES HOLMAN.

P. S. I trust my late brethren will for *once*, look favorably on the object that has induced me thus to lay before them the grounds that originated my exclusion from the Baptist Church.

More than fifteen years had I been a member ; and with what zeal and diligence, I have attended to every duty that devolved on me, I will leave *them* coolly to determine. In doing so, they will I am sure, reflect upon the late transaction with regret. Why could they not have pointed out a medium path? It is true, I saw the difficulties the Church was placed in, by the *imprudence* of their minister, who had threatened that *either He, or I*, should leave the Church. Still, wisdom might have pointed out a less hasty measure.

On account of the very extraordinary proceedings taken upon a thing so trivial, it is not at all surprising that my temper was excited, and doubtless, too much. This I acknowledged. But when asked by my brethren, to make what I deemed unnecessary concessions to Mr. C. I made use of a *strong expression* in reply to such a request, which even now, I do not conceive it my duty to retract

J. H.